Sol Painting, INC

By Meg Medina

I (Merci) climb into Papi’s van. It is my turn to ride in the front seat. My brother, Roli sits on a paint bucket in the back of the van. He is five years older than I am. At the end of the school year, he will graduate. He is hoping to go to college.

We look up to the 22nd floor and see people in hazmat uniforms putting furniture into bins labeled biohazard.

Dona Rosa, an old neighbor died. No one knew that she died. Her body become rotten.

Roli said, When a body rots its called putrefaction. This means is rots. It smells.”

Roli is always using big science words. He wants to be a medical examiner- a person who works on dead bodies.

As we drive to our painting job, Roli, Papi and I eat pan Cubanos. It is like a warm bread that is dripping in butter and grilled flat.

When I get older I want to own Papi’s painting company. I want to become his apprentice and learn all that I can from him. I want to own the painting business. I want to call the business Sol Painting, Inc. I want it to be a huge business. I want it bigger than Home Depot.

Papi drives and drives. He is taking us to a painting job. It is already hot. It is 85 degrees and is only 8:00 in the morning.

Roli is a senior. He will graduate this year. I will be at the same school, but I am only in the 7th grade. Papi and Mother decided that they were going to send me to Seaward Pines, a private school. Although Mom and Papi are divorced, they both agreed that going to Seaward Pines would be the best for my future.

Roli and I are surprised to see Papi turn into Seaward Pines. He tells us that we are going to paint the entire gym and several classrooms. He tells us that he will not need to pay for the first semester for me, because we are bartering.

I do not want to go to Seaward Pines. I liked my old school. I do not want to wear the red uniform jacket or blazer and grey pants. None of my friends go to Seaward Pines.

Papi tells me to tell the headmaster of the school that we have arrived to paint the gym. When we are getting our paint cans out of the van, I watch the kids playing soccer. She walks with us to the gym.

After I paint the door, the girl soccer team runs into the gym to get out of the heat. The first girl touches the door, and gets paint all over her hands. The next girl does the same thing, and so on.

I am feeling angry. One of the girls turns and says, “Perdon.” Another girls says, “Excuse-oh moi.” I wait for Papi. I know he is going to scream at them for ruining the door. The walls will rattle. When Papi loses his temper, it feels as if you’re trapped inside a huge storm cloud.

Nothing happens.

Finally, their coach comes in. “I told the girls to use the other door,” is all he has to say.

Papi’s stillness makes me feel worse. Why didn’t he say anything? He’s Papi. He’s the boss. He’s an adult, the man in charge. How could he lt this happen?

Papi tells the coach, “We will clean this up.”

Papi repaints the door, and the wall that was damaged by the girls. I am furious at Papi. I do not understand why we were all treated as though we were invisible. Why did the girls assume that we did not speak English?

Papi dropped Roli and I off at Mom’s house. He told us that he would find someone to help him finish painting the house tomorrow.

When we get home, Roli goes upstairs. I went into the pool area. The pool was gross. It was covered with dirty leaves. It had a dead frog in it.

Eventually Roli came into the pool area. He cleans the pool. He explains to me that Papi chose to be invisible because that is how he is paying for my tuition at the school. He needed the job painting the gym, so that he didn’t have to pay money for my schooling.

Roli jumps into the water. His cannonball gets me all wet. I am so surprised that he jumped into the water, that I am no longer mad at Papi. I understood what Papi had done for me. I too jump into the water and race him to the deep end.